1;Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

PREFACE

This study is based on twenty months' fieldwork among the Fort Jameson Ngoni of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland which I undertook during 1946–9 as a research officer of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. I have already published a description of marital relations among these people as well as a general outline of their social organization. In this work I discuss their political system. I hope in a later publication to describe Ngoni village life. 114

The raw materials of the field anthropologist are the actions, sayings and writings of his informants, and I am deeply indebted to those many people who allowed me to make use of their knowledge and experience of Ngoni society and to join with them in their activities. It would be invidious to mention only some of the great number of people who helped me with my inquiries and I must content myself with this expression of gratitude and thanks to all who made my work possible. I hope that my writings do not betray their confidence or invade their privacy. I shall regard it as only a partial repayment of my debt to them if this book helps them and their neighbours to a better understanding of the world they live in.

I must, however, mention by name Paramount Chief Mpezeni Jere III, K.M., for the support which he gave my work in his country; and I have to thank Lomthunzi Cazingwa Nkhuwa, Councillor Zowani Lukhezo Zulu III, and Mdani Kaunha Tembo for the hospitality I enjoyed in their villages. M. B. Lukhero, my clerk throughout my stay in Ngoniland, introduced me to Ngoni ways of life and assisted me in my inquiries. This study is as much his as it is mine. 115 122

My fieldwork owes much to the co-operation and assistance given me by the Provincial Administration in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, by the missions and by planters and traders in the district. I am particularly indebted to Mr. D. B. Hall, District Commissioner, and Mrs. Hall for hospitality shown my family and myself, and it is a pleasure to recall the interest taken in my work by Mr. R. P. Bush, O.B.E., Secretary for African Affairs, and Mrs. Bush; Commander T. S. L. Fox-Pitt, O.B.E., R.N. (Retd.), Provincial Commissioner, and Mrs. Fox-Pitt; Mr. H. C. Bayldon, M.C., District Officer, and Mrs. Bayldon; Mr. H. J. Roberts, Provincial Education Officer, and Mrs. Roberts; Mr. M. K. Daka, Headmaster of the Ngoni Native Authority School; and in Nyasaland Mr. D. W. Saunders-Jones, O.B.E., Provincial Commissioner; 000

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114 second-hand account of the Ngoni, and some relevant information is given by Soga (1930).

Good accounts of pre-conquest social life are not so numerous. The most useful accounts are those of Wiese (1891 and 1900), Angus (1899), and Deare (1928), based on observations in the years immediately prior to the war of 1898. For the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland there are the works of Elmslie (1899) and Fraser (1901 and 1914). Read, in 1935, was the first to apply modern methods of inquiry and has published comparative material on the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, Fort Jameson and southern Nyasaland, and on the neighbouring Cewa.

Some of this literature has found its way back to the Ngoni [872] themselves, and children nowadays acquire their knowledge of the exploits of their ancestors as much from school books as from oral tradition. Under these circumstances, I decided that no useful 121 purpose would be served by my trying to make conventional inquiries into tribal history with the aim of establishing what had in fact occurred in the past. I found it was impossible to tell whether similarity between an informant's account of a past event and a previously published version was due to common origin, independent invention, or good teaching in school. I was however concerned with the quite different problem of what use the Ngoni made of their history,[4] and I collected the histories of many counties, villages and people. For the material in this chapter I have therefore relied on the fullest and most lucid of these many versions of [115] Ngoni history, that by Chibambo, an Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, supplemented by the writings of Poole, a member of the Administration at Fort Jameson for many years, and Lancaster, who was a game warden in the area.

2. *The Nguni background*

173 Before we can understand the Ngoni of central Africa we must first consider social conditions farther south, for it was from the south that many Ngoni came. From the sixteenth century onwards, south-eastern Africa was peopled by subsistence cultivators growing cereals and herding cattle. The Nguni, as the southernmost branch of these peoples is now called, occupied the area which has become Swaziland, Natal and the Transkei. At first the Nguni were not organised into powerful states but from the common background of Nguni society there developed, from the last quarter of the eighteenth century onwards, several strong political units. We may mention among others the Zulu empire under Shaka, the Swazi

[4] See my 'History in a changing society'.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956

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[p. v]

PREFACE

THE material on which this book is based was collected during three periods in Nyasaland as a Research Fellow of the International African Institute: May–December 1935; April 1936–June 1937; July 1938–August 1939. 115 121 122

The choice had to be made whether to concentrate on one Ngoni area and omit the other, and also whether to present Ngoni culture as a common element in both areas or to regard them as separate cultural areas. I decided to gather material from northern and central Ngoniland, and accordingly spent about one-third of the time in north Nyasaland and about two-thirds in central Nyasaland. I used the Nyanja language all the time in central Ngoniland, and found that many people understood it in the north. I learned some Zulu, enough to read and hear Ngoni when spoken, but it was dying out as a language except for certain ceremonial and legal terms and expressions. Very few people spoke it in central Ngoniland; most of the older people knew it in the north and in one area it was still the language of the home in 1936. 122 197 [182]

The decision to present Ngoni culture as a common constituent of Ngoni life in all parts of Nyasaland was made after the material had been analysed. I decided also to attempt a reconstruction of Ngoni life at the time of the first European contacts, when the kingdoms were at the height of their power. Men and women were still alive, when I was in Ngoni villages, who had fought as warriors, who had organized large households, who had been present at the accession and death of the Paramounts. Their experiences were part of Ngoni culture and inseparable from much of what was regarded as essentially 'Ngoni' in the 1930's. 121

In both areas the informants were of two kinds: those who welcomed an anthropologist who would collect and record Ngoni history, patterns of social organization, and cultural behaviour of which they were intensely proud; and those who were reluctant at first to give information, either because they were Christians and had been at school and said they had 'forgotten'; or because they were suspicious of all Europeans, and did not want to speak of what to them was a treasured and hidden heritage. 115

Working in more than one language medium and bringing into the open Ngoni terms not as a rule used in the presence of Europeans presented a number of problems both of terminology and orthography. I have included a glossary of Ngoni terms used frequently in the book. There were several variations of the prefixes in common use with Ngoni words, as for example *abalumuzana*, *abamuzana*, *malumuzana*, all three of which were used in northern and central Ngoniland. The clicks, 128 193

CHAPTER I

THE MILITARY FOUNDATIONS OF THE NGONI KINGDOMS

AFTER the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland their political system went through three main periods of change and development up to 1939. The first was that of pre-European days, characterized by the military kingdoms. The second was the period of direct British administration, when the chief features of the Ngoni kingdoms were latent and unrecognized. The third was the period from 1933 onwards when the passing of the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances gave recognition to certain traditional forms of the Ngoni political system. Since, in their early forms, from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the Ngoni kingdoms were founded on conquest, the maintenance of military power both for defence and aggression was an essential condition of their survival. We shall therefore begin the examination of the Ngoni political system with a chapter on their military organization. Men of the Swazi and of trans-Zambesi clans were proud of the part their fathers and grandfathers had played in Ngoni wars. These wars were recalled to the people in the recitals of oral tradition and in the songs and dances which were part of Ngoni culture. Cibambo, who has already been mentioned as the historian of his people, wrote for me in English the following account of Ngoni warfare in the old days, part of which, written in Tumbuka, was used as a reader for the schools in the Livingstonia Mission area. Cibambo had, as a young boy, seen the preparations for war, and had gone more than once as a carrier for his elder brothers who belonged to one of the last formed regiments.

178 642 648 [721] 181 115 [124]

NGONI WARFARE IN OLD DAYS

539

¶ To the Ngoni war was like work and his heart rejoiced to think of it. When the old men sat in the kraal the talk that roused discussion was of war and their journeyings. All the heroes of the tribe had received their praise-greetings through service in war. In this, ordinary people and slaves came together, for though they might have been unknown to begin with, if they were heroes in one or two wars the whole country knew them. The slaves who showed their courage and strength in war quickly received their freedom and many also had villages of their own because of the people they had captured in war; others obtained the standing of men in authority. Those who were cowards were humiliated and laughed at, and those who had not entered the enemy stockade or killed a man were not allowed to dance in triumph in the kraal but only to join in the *ligubo* dance along with others.

721 554 [567] [577]

[P. 28 is blank]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

respect to all adults, whether Ngoni or not, whether of their 576
family, or helpers in the household, or former captives. If 577
children did not so behave to old and poor people, they 858
were punished and made to feel ashamed as if they had [867]
failed to honour their own relatives.

A Ngoni elder when speaking of the testimony of early 576
travellers in Ngoniland to the good manners found in Ngoni 828
households said: 'Such honouring of each other came to the 829
Ngoni because they liked living together without any scat- 867
tering as was the custom of other Nyasaland people. . . . .
Such honour was not shown by young people for fear of being beaten, but because all children were well taught that this behaviour was right and proper for the upbuilding of the land.'

The emphasis in this quotation is clearly on the connexion 829
between personal behaviour and the integrity and prosperity of the Ngoni kingdom. When Ngoni elders were talking about child training and its effect on the future of the Ngoni people, they made constant reference to 'those who spoil the land'. The phrase was the same as taking the roof off a hut, i.e. destroying it for the purpose for which it was built. This determined emphasis on behaviour illustrated the Ngoni intention of regulating personal contacts within their society, so that harmonious relations would build up the society which quarrels and factions would destroy, and indeed had partly destroyed in some of the historic secessions from the kingdom. Harmonious personal relations are perhaps the covert if not the overt aim of all human societies from the individual family outwards. We see this however in sharp outline in Ngoni life, partly because they were acutely aware of the vulnerability from external influences of their society and way of living.

Two very ancient folk-tales illustrate Ngoni thinking about 539
keeping their kingdom and society intact and maintaining 829
their code of polite behaviour.

The first was taken down by me from a very old man who [115]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

115 539 829 had heard it from his grandmother. She had been a young Ngoni woman at the time the Ngoni crossed the Zambezi, and hence this story was said to have had its origin in the Ngoni former homeland in Natal.

The story of Heva

539 At the beginning of the creation of the world there was a woman of reddish colour whose name was Golela, and she had two children. The name of the older one was Heva, and of the second one Malusi. My grandmother, Madakacha, said that Malusi was the cause of our herds of cattle becoming smaller. When Malusi was herding cattle on the river plains where they were feeding, he kept on disturbing them and driving some away from the rest.

At this time Heva was staying with his mother. Her work was to keep watch over the sun so that the birds did not peck it, and Heva helped her by flapping away the flies which were troubling her.

Their mother Golela asked Heva, 'Where is your brother? What is he doing?' Heva replied, 'There he is yonder, disturbing your cattle on the river plain.' Then Golela called Malusi and said to him, 'Go. Choose what you want and depart. Go with them far away. What is left here is for Heva.'

After Malusi went away, all that remained on the river plain belonged to Heva, including the animals and the birds and the crops, but the cattle were reduced in number.

My grandmother used to say about this story, 'We who are descended from Heva are the victims of this separation between the brothers. Because Malusi in the beginning of the world took away many of the cattle of his mother's house, we have never had large herds of cattle since then.'

The Ngoni saw in the archaic form of this folk-tale several meanings. It was one of their traditional creation myths. It supported their belief that they were once owners of vast

information is insufficient for any reconstruction in great detail, but the general principles are clear and to some extent our conclusions can be checked by reference to material from other areas, particularly the nineteenth century accounts of the Ngoni of Northern Nyasaland and the Zulu. The account of present-day marriage is based on information collected in the field during 1946-9.[3]

The period of the 1890's is chosen for comparison with the present because of the catastrophic change in Ngoni life which occurred in 1898 when they were defeated by the British. Old people who were alive during the period are still available for questioning and many younger people have been told of those times by their parents and grandparents. Although Ngoni cannot generally remember beyond their grandparents, genealogies collected now yield some information about the 1890's and link that period to the present. Important social changes occurred in 1898, changes which for the greater part were, and still are, regretted by the Ngoni, and these accentuate the difference between time present and time past. The past is recollected and recounted and has a moral value. Children are taught the glories of the past to compensate them for the inadequacies of the present. The teaching of tribal history as a school subject reinforces this view. With the passage of time the past has been idealized and simplified but the picture is still clear enough for us to be able to distinguish probable fact from unlikely rationalization. Marriage in 'the time of peace', as the period prior to 1898 is called, is one aspect of this picture.

Marriage is one part of kinship, for it is by the twin processes of marriage and childbirth that the web of kinship is spun. For the purposes of our analysis we have had to sever marriage from its context in what may appear at times rather an arbitrary fashion. A society is a whole, if not always a well integrated whole, and no one part of it can be fully understood without a simultaneous knowledge of all its other parts. Societies persist, more or less, through time, and it is clear that we cannot hope to grasp the total significance of the working of a society at any one time without a knowledge of the changes or lack of change in that society both before and after. Yet we cannot marshal all these relationships simultaneously, let alone present them through the medium of words. Our attempt to comprehend the present cannot wait until we have full knowledge of the future, and our analysis of one sector of a system must proceed in advance of our synthesis of the whole. Ngoni society has persisted through the last sixty years rather less than more, and it may well be argued that present-day Ngoni society is poorly integrated. Nevertheless it is to be hoped that an analysis of Ngoni marriage may, on the one hand, demonstrate

[3] I made two visits to the Fort Jameson Ngoni while on the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, spending in all a year and eight months there. I was assisted by my clerk, Mr. M. B. Lukhero, in inquiring into former conditions as well as observing contemporary social life.

11:Lancaster G-5 (ca. 1935) 1937 FR5 Ngoni FR5

(8) Mguzhulu Mphanza; one of the indunas of the Ziolomba Regiment. Crossed over the Zambesi in 1835. No further particulars known. 159 173

(9) Ntabeni Kumalo; half brother of Zongendaba. Father, Hlatshwayo; mother, unknown; wife, Uthuvi. Regiment, Ziolomba. Died and was buried in Ufipa Country in 1846. [701]

(10) Mafu Kumalo; elder brother of Hlatshwayo. Father, Mangangati. Killed in action prior to arrival at the Zambesi.

(11) Hlatshwayo Kumalo, the son of Mangangati of the Kumalo clan; married Mquamache Nzima. He had three brothers, Mafu, Gumete and Mphange. He was the father of Zongendaba, Ntabeni, Somfula, Mgai and Lomapela. [614]

I have been unable to ascertain if he took part in the Great Migration. My information leads me to the conclusion that he was dead before Tshaka vanquished the Ama-Ndwandwe.

(12) Mtwalu Jere; born before the Crossing of the Zambesi, about 1833? Father, Zongendaba; mother, Nqutu Nzima; wife, Magodise; sons, Amon Jere, and Yohane Jere. Regiment, Manyoka Masoko. Refused the chieftainship because he stated that his father's, Chief Zongendaba's, last wishes had not been carried out. There is no truth in the statement that he was unfitted to hold the chieftainship through physical defects. Died in Nyasaland (Angoni Land), 1890. [643]

(13) Mombera Jere Mbelwa); born at Chulu on the way to Fipa, 1840. Mother, Umnene Nzima, a Swaz; father, Zongendaba; half-sister, Mphangela; blood sister, Lomagazi, who it is stated by some was born before the Zambesi was crossed; son, Chimtunga, whose mother was cast off because of adultery. Chimtunga's appointment was not recognised by his grandfather's indunas. Died in 1891, Angoni Land, Nyasaland. [684] [643]

(14) Mperembe Jere Not born north side of the Zambesi River; it is stated his mother did not cross the Zambesi in 1835. 159 173

Mperembe went into the Awemba Country after the break up of the tribe, but appears to have crossed back eastwards over the Loangwa River and joined Mombera and Mtwalu about 1866/9, after being badly beaten by the Chitimukulu. 643

It is known in the Mpezeni country that he captured Chanda mukulu, sister of Chitimukulu, whom he brought back with him and married at Mtelela village near the Mulowi River, that he had one son by her named Chinombo, and that after the Ngoni rebellion Chanda mukulu was returned to her own country; she resided on the Mackera River for some years. She had slits in her ears so large that one could put one's hand through them. [583] [304]

My informant, Sayeve Phiri, who was born at Kasitu, was caught by Mombera's people at Kanyenda, Kdakota, and made a slave; she knew Mombera and Chanda mukulu well. She is well over seventy and resides in the Fort Jameson Location. Mperembe Jere appears to have been a disgruntled and bloodthirsty despot and to have had no interests other than bloodthirsty raids and the joys of his harem. He [115] [567] [152]

(19) The *isi-bongo*[1] "Jere," appears to have definitely not been used prior to the year 1835, and from information received it is extremely unlikely that it was in general use until after the death of Zongendaba. The chief *isi-bongo* up to that time appear to have been Kumalo, Nqumayo, Tole (said to be the eye of an ox), Nzima, Gama, Mkhalapi, Ndhlovu, and Nkosi. 173 [614]

The *isitakazela*[2] now little used were Ndaba and Ntungwa. [576]

The language spoken by the Ngoni was closely allied to isi-swazi. [197]

The Paramount Chief, Mpezeni II, still receives the royal salute of "Bayete" on all official occasions and in his own home. [643]

(20) Ba-Pule people. It is stated that, when the Ngoni first met these people, they carried long spears and shields made of game hides, and they could converse with the Ngoni in isi-swazi, which was not the language of the Ba-Pule; when they spoke their own language they were not understood by the Ngoni. The general opinion of the old indunas is that they were BaSuto people. They supplied excellent fighting material to the Ngoni impis and were treated as equals. [648]

INTERESTING NOTE *re* DEATH OF LOBENGULA.

Lobengula, Chief of the Ama-Tebele. It is stated as follows. 159 173

Lobengula crossed the Zambesi at Manyerere Drift and arrived at the Mtenguleni Uka Sosera village on the Lutembwe River in January, 1894. He was carried by an Ngoni party who had been sent for that purpose. He was a very heavily built man with a large protruding belly, and breasts like those of a woman heavy in milk. So cumbersome was he, that he had to be helped to move about from one place to another. He had a great pipe in which he smoked hemp. If he passed the pipe he would talk; but if not it was a sign he wished to be alone. When Chief Mpezeni visited him he used to crawl on his hands and knees to greet him. The day Lobengula died the rock on the Sanjika Kopje split and fell and all the great Ngoni indunas mourned. Sanjika is on the road between Fort Jameson and Fort Manning. I have seen the split and fallen rock. 643 [142] [276] [763]

It is not known where Lobengula was buried; as he was a fugitive from justice, the secret was closely kept. It is said he died shortly after his arrival from the Zambesi in 1894. This information was given by an aged Ngoni councillor, named Ropu, who resided near Fort Jameson, and died in 1927. This story is but little known and usually all knowledge is denied of this subject. [766] [115]

List of people who, being the oldest living Ngoni, attended a meeting held on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 18th, 19th and 20th of January, 1935, at the Paramount Chief's village to discuss the history of Chief Zongendaba:—Sanjiyo Soko, Zamajaya Mphanza, Mahamunye Mphanza, Mahawa Mwase Shawa, Dude Tole, Mjoko Ndwambi Jere, Mabulaliche Tembo, Mzenje Nkhowa, Katanda Manyumy Mahowazo, Kapendeko Jawai Mvula, Machiliko Mphanza, Chibengulane Ngulowa, Chiwere Mainiko, Masina Jere, Mapalanga Mphanza, Chief Mpezeni Jere II, Chief Madalmowe, Andrew Kapatamoyo Jere, James Ndawambi Hara, Matrino Kangwere Nkhowa, Pesayani Mvula, Adriyano Phiri, Zebulubulo Gawani Mawere, Chingulukani Dimba, Siya Mvula, Ngangu Singo Jere, Mahawa Mphanza, Mwaki Lukhelo, Njambwa Tembo, Adamburuko Mchanga, etc. 115 527 551 814

[1] [isi-bongo = sib name -- Analyst]

[2] [isitakazelo = honorific epithets -- Analyst]